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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE  
ON THE  
“DE TRIVMPHO STVLTITIÆ”  
OF  
PERISAULUS FAUSTINUS

BY  
PROFESSOR JOHN FERGUSON  
LLD FRSE FSA

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BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE  
ON THE  
“De Trivmpho Stvltitiæ”  
OF PERISAULUS FAUSTINUS.

IN the concluding part<sup>1</sup> of a series of researches on the bibliography of histories of inventions and collections of “secrets” about nature, science, and arts, I was unable to avoid reference to certain authors who have written in disparagement of human learning in general. The most important of these iconoclasts are Cornelius Agrippa, who lived between 1486 and 1535, and is remembered by his work on the *Vanity and Uncertainty of the Arts and Sciences*, published in 1530, and Thomas Baker, of St. John’s College, Cambridge, who is remembered as an antiquarian, but who wrote a work about the beginning of last century on the insufficiency of learning. To these might have been added the ever-popular *Praise of Folly* by Erasmus, except that its popularity made mention of it superfluous, but there was another of similar tenor, which induced me to examine it because of its rarity and the conflicting accounts given of it. The conclusion I arrived at after investigation was, that, without a comparison of the copies described as different, no progress can be made towards an explanation of the cause of the differences. At present I have no opportunity of making this comparison, but I have thought it might be worth while giving a fuller account of the book and stating the questions which have to be answered when the opportunity does offer. In any case, they make a curious paragraph in the bibliography of the books considered in the papers referred to, and, besides, I am not aware of any account of the book in English, or even of a reference to it.

2. Half-a-dozen years prior to the appearance of Agrippa’s

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<sup>1</sup> Read to the Archæological Society of Glasgow, January 19, 1888. The present note may be regarded as supplementary to what was said on that occasion.

declamation, Perisaulus Faustinus, an Italian, wrote and published a Latin poem, in hexameters, on the triumph of folly. It is a delineation, with historical allusions, of the emptiness of the arts and sciences, and the failure of everything that attracts mankind ultimately to satisfy him, and, therefore, it anticipates in a slight way the more sweeping condemnation launched at all human endeavour by Agrippa.

3. The poem is divided into three books, in which are held up to view the pursuits of youth, of manhood, and of old age respectively, and the author passes his verdict on the worthlessness of each. He does not scold; but everything that engages the attention of mankind, gives him occupation, excites his ambition, or, as he fondly persuades himself, purifies his aims and beautifies the sordidness of his life, is depreciated. "Vanity and vexation of spirit" are the watchwords of this sixteenth-century preacher. It is not a little remarkable how soon after the great revival the discovery was made of the unremunerativeness of learning; very beautiful it was, no doubt: very ennobling, but the human spirit craved for something beside. It is striking to find that the cloud of oppression and hopelessness was far from being at once dispelled by so much new light as was then breaking on the world; it is startling to observe more than one writer taking up the old lament: this also is folly; it is as good to be foolish as wise, since the end is the same. As Faustinus says:

Quid tandem? cecidit. moritur, tot sæva laborum  
Millia: tot curas parvo sub marmore clausit  
Mors rerum Domitrix.

Or in the words of a modern who has gathered up the idea and given voice to this despair of the time over the fruitlessness of all for which one has laboured:

Vanity, saith the preacher, vanity!  
What's done is done, and she is dead beside,  
Dead long ago, and I am Bishop since!  
And as she died so must we die ourselves,  
And thence ye may perceive the world's a dream.  
Life, how and what is it?

Swift as a weaver's shuttle fleet our years:  
Man goeth to the grave, and where is he?

4. This is the refrain of Faustinus' poem. Every pursuit of man is vanity: *Mortalium vana opera; Vrbes tandem cineres*

et fabula; Roma quoque facta fabula; Quod fama quamvis longa nil confert; Pueritia vano labori exposita; Vana juventæ studia; Canes et equos alere stultitia; Stultissimum ducendi chori delectamentum; Musices studium inane; Militia labor sterilis; Philosophi fabula; Rhetorice verbosa garrulitas; Medicina labor inexhaustus; Geometra delirus; Astronomia mera insania; Alchimia quam vana sit et ridenda; Artis magicæ vanitas et insania; Pulpitarii Concionatores, qui sacro relictæ eloquio, ad physicas se conferunt questiones, fabula; Vanum aedificandi studium; Dialectice garritus vanus; Grammaticus labor jejunos et inanis; Senectutis deliria; or, in one word as he puts it, Humana vita tota, labor, et afflictio. He reserves, however, his greatest bitterness for the section<sup>2</sup>: De insano conjugii desiderio, and draws a picture of the women of the time which, if true, justifies the title, and in any case may be set off against Cornelius Agrippa's laudation of the female sex. The problem, therefore, had been set, but the fit phrase had not yet been invented, else Faustinus would have said that life was not worth living.

5. There is no doubt that it is all true what he says about the vanity of human labour, and the failure of every human life, and that fame, however long it be, does no good, and that in general a living dog is better than a dead lion, unless maybe for museum purposes. But the Triumph of Folly, like Adelung's history thereof, is its own evidence and commendation. Can folly be of better report than when a man takes the trouble to write a long poem in Latin hexameters for the sole purpose of proving that every pursuit, everything is vain? Faustinus has not said under which category hexameters about folly come, unless it be his own rubric: "Poetica tota Fabula." What then was the author's vain motive for writing, and printing, it? A vain show of learning, or ambition, or a desire for that fame, which, however prolonged, is of no benefit? Whatever the stimulus may have been to write, Perisaulus Faustinus is remembered; he has his scrap of fame, but not for any merit that he could possibly have anticipated; not because he wrote verses—mediocre ones; not because he would be a satirist and moralist; not because he maintained a paradox—"a most ingenious paradox"—and wrote a book to show the folly of books and book-

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<sup>2</sup> According to the *Biographie Universelle*, this section was copied by a physician of Padua, Antonius Ulmus, in his singular work: *Physiologia barbe humanæ*, Bologna, 1603, second edition, folio, pp. 134-135.



writing, but because his book has become so rare that it is vain to seek for it, or to hope to get it, so that it has no chance of a reading. Could vanity have a greater triumph? Faustinus is remembered—because he is forgotten; because nothing is known about him but a book of his, which no one can get to read.<sup>3</sup>

Quid tum?

Quid tandem? quum sit nisi fabula tota Poesis.

Fabula carmen erit, simul et tu fabula fies.

Vain are the hopes the sons of men

Upon their works have built.

And now for the book itself.

6. The copy of the poem which I have seen has the following title:

P E R I S A V L I

FAVSTINI TRADOCII

DE HONESTO APPETITV.

FAVSTINVS TERDOCEO

DE TRIVMPHO STVLITIAE.

ARIMINI TYPIS HIERONYMI

SONCINI ITERVM OMNI

DILIGENTIA EXCVSSA.

*Ad Reuerendisimum. D.D. Gorum Gerium Vicelegatum Bononiensem.*

The volume is a small 8vo, not paged, but with signatures A to G in eights, and H in four. The book is printed in italics, with ornamental capitals at the beginning of the chief divisions of the poems. The title is in capitals except the last two lines, the first, third, and fifth lines and the word "Arimini" being printed in red; all the rest is in black. The title-page is surrounded by a woodcut border of grotesque faces and figures, which was afterwards used for the title-pages of the Italian translation of the *Physnomia* of Michael Scotus, Venice, 1533 and 1537. On the verso of the title is the dedication or epistle of Soncinus to Gorus Gerius, Bishop of Fano, and Vice-Legate of Bologna. On the following leaf, Aii recto, the first poem: On moderation in desires, begins; it goes down to Biii recto.<sup>4</sup> This is fol-

<sup>3</sup> Brunet quotes a very rare tract which seems to relate to Faustinus. The title he gives is: *Barzelletta del preclarissimo poeta misser Faustino da Rimine: con altre opere di diversi autori.* s. l. & a. 4. ff. 2, of 2 columns. I have found no notice of his life. The article in the *Biographie Universelle*, Paris, 1855, XIII. p. 438, is devoted entirely to the book and its two editions.

<sup>4</sup> *Biographie Universelle* says Diiij recto, incorrectly.

lowed immediately by the author's address to his poem on Folly and to his readers. It ends *Bvi recto*, and then the poem itself begins and goes down to *Hiii recto*, where it ends. On the verso of this leaf is the epitaph on Faustinus, in six hexameters, followed by this colophon:

Impressum Venetiis sub Inclito Principe Andrea Griti per  
Io. Frāciscum & Io. Antonium de Rusconibus Fratres  
M. CCCCC. XXIIII. Die. VII. Decembris.

Below this is a device of the usual kind; on a black ground, a white circle with a horizontal diameter, from which a radius is drawn upwards at right angles, produced beyond the circle, and having one long and two shorter unequal lines drawn at right angles across the produced part. In the three spaces within the circle are the letters G. R. M. The last leaf H<sub>4</sub> is blank.

7. There are few books of greater rarity than this one, as can be gathered from the descriptions of all who have had to refer to it. Further evidence exists in the fact that it is not in the catalogues of the Bodleian, Trinity College, Dublin, St. Andrews and Aberdeen Universities, the Signet and Advocates' Libraries, or in the *Bibliotheca Spenceriana*, the Chatsworth and Huth Collections; and there was no copy in the Kloss, Sunderland and Wodhull Sales. The poem is not quoted by Tiraboschi, or by Graesse in his *Literärgeschichte*, and the author has no place in Ersch and Gruber's *Encyklopädie*.

8. In the British Museum, however, there are two copies [1070. d. 9 (1) and 1070. d. 10] which I have examined and which correspond with the copy above described in every particular—title, colophon and all. The only difference is that the second of the two copies wants the blank leaf at the end.

9. I have met with six published descriptions of the book, four of which are from personal inspection, the other two are at second hand. At the risk of some repetition, I shall quote them in full.

10. The first is by Maittaire,<sup>5</sup> and it is the earliest:

FAUSTINI (Perisauli) Tradocii de honesto appetitu; Faustinus Terdoceo de triumpho stultitiæ (metricè): *Arimini typis Hieronymi Soncini iterum omni diligentia excussa*. Et in fine; *Venetiis sub inclito principe Andrea Griti per Jo. Franciscum et Jo. Antonium de Rusconibus fratres*. M.CCCCC. XXIIII. die VII. Decembris. 8° Venet. 1524.

<sup>5</sup> *Annalium Typographicorum ... Index*, Londini, 1741, I. 393.

This agrees with the copy I have described, and with the Museum copies.

11. The next is by Brunet : <sup>6</sup>

FAUSTINUS. Perisauli Faustini tradocii de honesto appetitu. Faustinus trad., de triumpho stultitiæ. *Arimini typis Hieronymi Soncini iterum omni diligentia excussa.* (sine anno), in-8. sign. A—H. ff. non chiffr., caract. ital. [12686]

Maittaire, Index, I, 393, après avoir donné l'indication de ce poème, à peu près, comme ci-dessus, ajoute : *Et in fine, Venetiis sub inclito principe Andrea Gritti per Franciscum et Io. Antonium de Rusconibus fratres.* M.CCCC.XXIII. die VII. Decembris. Or cette souscription ne se trouve ni dans l'exemplaire de la Bibliothèque Mazarine (21236), ni dans un autre que j'ai vu, et dont voici la description. Le titre copié ici est imprimé en rouge et noir, dans un passe-partout gravé en bois ; derrière ce frontispice se lit une épître dédicatoire de Jérôme Soncino à Gorus Gerius, évêque de Fano, laquelle n'est point datée. Le premier poème, *De honesto appetitu*, commence au f. Aii et finit au f. Biiij recto ; le 2<sup>e</sup> poème finit au 3<sup>e</sup> f. recto de la signat. H., au verso duquel on lit l'épithaphe (en 6 vers) de l'auteur, suivie de l'indication *Apud Ariminum per Hieronymum Soncinum* ; et le 4<sup>e</sup> f. de ce même cahier H est tout blanc. Il existe bien cependant une édition de ces deux poèmes, impr. à Venise *per fratres de Rusconibus*, 1524, pet. in-8., laquelle était chez Pinelli, II, n° 5144, et chez Courtois, vend. 28 fr. m. r. et revend. seulement 3 sh. chez Heber. Maittaire aura vu un exemplaire de cette édition, auquel se trouvait ajouté le titre de la précédente.

I have quoted this at length, as it is the only full account from personal inspection we have of a variant from the edition I have described. So far as one can tell from *description* alone, there is no traceable difference between the copies, except in the colophon. I may say, however, that Brunet's off-hand method of explaining away this difference does not quite satisfy me.

12. The third notice refers to the copy which was in the Libri Library. The simplest way will be to quote what was said about it in Sotheby's catalogue of the sale.<sup>7</sup> It will be observed, in passing, that this was considered one of the rarest and most select books of Libri's wonderful collection.

<sup>6</sup> *Manuel*, Paris, 1864, ii. col. 1196.

<sup>7</sup> *Catalogue of the choicer Portion of the . . . Library formed by M. . . Libri*, London, 1859, 8°, p. 124.



964. FAUSTINI Tradocii (Perisauli) de honesto Appetitu.  
Faustinus Terdoceo de Triumpho Stultitiæ  
VERY SCARCE, *red morocco, gilt edges*

*8vo. Arimini Typis H. Soncini, 1524*

This is probably the identical copy described by Maittaire i, 393, as having at end the imprint "*Impressum Venetiis sub Inclito Principe Andrea Gritti, per Io. Frâciscum & Io. Antonium de Rusconibus Fratres M.CCCC.XXIII. [sic] Die VII. Decembris.*" With the exception of this variation from the usual copies, which have *Apud Ariminum, per Hieronymum Soncinum*, the work is in every other respect the same, but in this state is perhaps UNIQUE. Soncinus, as is well known, used Aldine Types cut by Francis de Bologna, who supplied Aldus, and who by an eminent Bibliographer, is supposed to be no one else than the celebrated painter *Francia*.

The cataloguer here considers the copy dated 1524 as unique, and those that have Soncinus' colophon as the common copies. In this he has been influenced by Brunet without sufficient consideration.

13. There was a copy of this book in the Beckford Library, and the fourth account is in the sale catalogue of that collection, where it appears in the first portion sold in July 1882, by Sotheby.

2962. Faustini Tradocii (Perisauli) de honesto Appetitu.  
Faustinus Terdoceo de Triumpho Stultitiæ, *red morocco extra, gilt edges, by J. Mackenzie.*

*Arimini Typis H. Soncini, s. a.*

\*.\* An excessively rare volume of poems, printed with the Aldine types designed by *Francia*.

If this account is to be depended on, this copy, undated, must be identical with the Mazarine copy and the other described by Brunet, unless this be actually Brunet's copy.

14. Of the two remaining descriptions one is in the *Biographie Universelle*.<sup>8</sup> The author of the article has evidently not seen a copy, and has described after Brunet the two editions, namely, the Mazarine copy which he says is of the second edition, and the Venice one of 1524. This article adds the reference to Ulmus quoted above, §4.

15. The last of all is by Graesse.<sup>9</sup> It is as follows :

FAUSTINUS. Perisauli Faustini tradocii de honesto appetitu.  
Faustinus trad. de triumpho stultitiæ. Arimini typis Hieronymi

<sup>8</sup> Paris, 1855, T. xiii. p. 438.

<sup>9</sup> *Trésor de Livres Rares*. Dresde, 1861, ii. pp. 558-9.

Soncini iterum omni diligentia excussa. s. d. in-8°. (Sign. A—H. ff. non ch.) Car. ital.

Selon Maittaire, *Index* Vol. I. p. 393. ce volume porte à la fin la souscription : *Impressum Venetiis sub Inclito Principe Andrea Gritti per Jo. Fraciscum & Jo. Antonium de Rusconibus Fratres. M.CCCC.XXIII. die VII. Decembris*; mais Mr. Brunet nie expressément l'existence d'une éd. avec cette souscription, tous les ex., qu'il connaisse, portant à la fin du second poème l'indication *Apud Ariminum per Hieronymum Soncinum*, et croit que le bibliographe anglais a vu un exempl. de la seconde édition des deux poèmes, impr. à Ven. *per fratres de Rusconibus* 1524. pet. in-8°. (28 fr. Courtois. 3 sh. Heber.—V. *Cat. Pinelli* T. II. n°. 5144.) auquel se trouvait ajouté le titre de la précédente. Mais par le *Catal. Libri* 1859. n°. 964. où l'ex. de Maittaire est décrit, cette diversité des exempl. de la première éd. est constatée.

16. This note, besides containing two if not more positive errors in fact, seems to me contradictory if not incomprehensible, as well as false in principle.

(i.) Brunet (§ 11) says not a word about first and second editions, but only specifies *two* editions, and does not indicate in any way which of them he reckoned the first. He certainly does not call the 1524 edition the second.

(ii.) Maittaire's copy is *not* described in the Libri catalogue, but it is said there (§ 12) that the Libri copy is *probably* the identical copy described by Maittaire. No proof whatever is given except what is implied in the erroneous assumption of the cataloguer that the Libri copy was unique. It was not so, and Maittaire's may be one of three copies known to me, or it may be distinct from them.

(iii.) Brunet does *not deny expressly* the existence of an edition with the Venice 1524 colophon. On the contrary, he quotes it specifically, and mentions two copies of it in order to distinguish it from that with Soncinus' colophon. As for the authority of *tous les exemplaires* known to Brunet, there were only *two*, and he had an equal amount of authority for the Venice 1524 edition, if indeed he had not more, counting Maittaire's copy. But what Brunet really says is that the two copies he had seen had a different colophon from that given by Maittaire.

(iv.) Graesse seems to imply that Maittaire must be wrong, because the colophon he gives was not known to Brunet. Now Maittaire simply records what he had seen, and it does not signify in the very least—so far as the book's existence is concerned—whether Brunet saw it or not. Maittaire must have seen it,

how else could he have got the colophon? unless Graesse was prepared to say that Maittaire invented it, which is absurd. Graesse seems to think that a denial by Brunet is of more importance than Maittaire's affirmation, for it is only when the latter is confirmed by the Libri copy that he admits the possibility of Maittaire being right—in short, that Brunet's denial deprives a book of existence. By parity of reasoning I should be still more justified in denying the existence of Brunet's two copies, because Maittaire did not know them, and because I myself have not seen any such, but only those similar to Maittaire's, whereas Graesse saw no copy of any kind, and has his knowledge all at second hand. Such treatment of authorities is quite wrong in principle. Brunet himself did not make such a claim for authority or bibliographical dictatorship as is implicitly put forward for him by Graesse.

(v.) The two colophons, and the dated and undated copies, have bewildered Graesse. But he has never caught sight of the difficulties, and his last sentence is incomprehensible. If the Libri copy was Maittaire's, what more could it do in 1859 than it had done in 1741? What new confirmation could it give to itself? And if it were not Maittaire's copy, what else could it do but prove that Maittaire had given a correct description, and confirm the fact of there being two colophons? Graesse, however, seems to be of opinion that it establishes variations in the first edition, as against Brunet's explanation based on two editions. All this, however, is assumption, for the existence of different editions, or variations of one edition, constitutes the very essence of the problem which has to be solved.

17. From all this I conclude that Graesse really did not know what he was writing about, and his whole note illustrates excellently what I have said elsewhere about the futility and rashness of attempting to describe books one has not seen, and to harmonise the differences which one finds in different accounts, independently of the books themselves.

18. It is not necessary to add to the confusion by trying to reconcile these accounts when all that is really required is a comparison of copies with the different colophons. Until that is effected it is not worth while discussing opinions, for these will disappear when the facts have been ascertained. The results, however, as far as they go, may be recorded, and the questions to be answered may be stated.

19. I have seen three copies with "Arimini" on the title-

page, and Venice, 1524, in the colophon. There were besides the Maittaire, Pinelli, Courtois-Heber, and Libri copies. These seven copies<sup>10</sup> are to be set against the Mazarine copy, and the other described by Brunet, and apparently the Beckford copy. It was quite an error therefore to suppose the Libri copy to be *unique*, and it is equally wrong to consider Brunet's two as the *usual copies*. It is they which form the exception to the usual form.

20. Next, as to Brunet's explanation, which is this. There are two editions: one, without a date, has Soncinus' name both in the title and the colophon; the other has "Fratres de Rusconibus," Venice, 1524, in the colophon. Of the title-page of this edition he can say nothing, for the only copy he knew of was that described by Maittaire, and it had the title of the other edition with Soncinus' name prefixed to it. While putting that forward as an explanation of the variation or anomaly, Brunet passes over the difficulties which forthwith spring out of it. For example:

21. When he speaks of two editions, was there such a demand for the book as to bring it the length of a second edition? Is that the only way of accounting for the two colophons? Do two colophons necessitate two editions?

What has come of the "De Rusconibus" title-page, if it ever existed? Not one is known or mentioned. If it existed, why was it cancelled?

If there are two editions, as there are certainly two variants, which is the earlier? To my mind there can be but one reply: that of 1524, because the edition by Soncinus was *iterum excussa*. How Graesse with this phrase staring at him out of the title (copied from Brunet) which he gives, could call the 1524 edition the second, is a contradiction that only Graesse could clear up. It is this notion which has helped to land him in his confusion.

22. Consequent upon this, alternative hypotheses may be framed: Soncinus, either before or after printing the copies with his own title and colophon (I do not know that there is any way of telling), acquired surplus or remainder copies of the Venice, 1524, edition, and cancelling the "De Rusconibus" title-page, prefixed the title with his imprint and *iterum excussa*,

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<sup>10</sup> This number, however, may have to be reduced if it can be shown that some of the copies, having had more than one owner, thereby appear more than once on the list. But, making every allowance, the total could not be less than four, and is most likely larger.



without a qualm as to the discrepance between his new title and the old colophon. If this be right, it is remarkable that four (possibly seven) of the 1524 surplus copies with Soncinus' title have survived, while of Soncinus' own edition there are only three.

23. Or again, it may have been a conjoint edition—so many copies for one, so many for the other. In any case, however, there must have been two printings, because there are two colophons. The cancelling of a title-page is a simple matter, but the alteration of a colophon can be done only during printing. But if it were a conjoint edition, what explanation is to be given of the fact that every copy known has Soncinus' title-page, which belongs to the second edition?

24. If, on the other hand, Graesse be followed, and the 1524 edition is to be considered the second, the difficulties are still greater, as is apparent from Graesse's own confusion.

25. Which, then, is most probable: that Soncinus got surplus copies of the 1524 edition, the first, and, cancelling the title-page, put on his own, and also printed off some fresh copies, cancelling the colophon and putting his own; or that the "*De Rusconibus*" got copies of the undated edition, the first, and, without disturbing the title-page, altered the colophon; in which case what explanation is to be given of the *iterum excussa*; or, lastly, that there was a conjoint edition with two colophons, in which case why is there only one title-page, and that of an apparently second edition?

Brunet's cut-and-dry explanation, therefore, it seems to me does not meet all the difficulties of the case, if we are to rest satisfied with hypotheses.

26. At the bottom, however, of all these surmises lies one general assumption, namely, that the two sets of copies are absolutely identical, with the exception of the colophons. So far as one can judge from descriptions and collation, the two editions or variants *seem* identical, but it does not at all follow that they *are* identical; and that is the point which can be settled only by page-for-page comparison. In the course of my researches I have given instances of books apparently different, which were essentially identical,<sup>11</sup> as well as of reprints, which, by the ordinary modes of description, would appear to be identical, but

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<sup>11</sup> See the editions of Polydore Vergil's *De Inventoribus Rerum*, Rome, 1576, 1585, *Trans. Archaeol. Soc. Glasgow* (N.S.), 1886, i. pp. 195-6.



which comparison shows at once to be different from end to end, and it may be so in the present case.

27. The conclusion accordingly that I have been impelled to is what was announced at the start—the truth can be arrived at only by a comparison of copies. The essential facts are wanting at present; suppositions, assumptions, opinions, inferences, which are given instead, are not merely worthless, they are a positive encumbrance and hindrance.

28. If Faustinus were writing now, he might have added to his poem a few hexameters on the vanity of bibliographical speculations, as illustrated by his own book.

JOHN FERGUSON.

*University of Glasgow, January 6, 1889.*



See - Permit Manuel du Lommes -  
Ferdinand .